1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

287 PREPARATION OF TUNU CLOTH.—The tunu tree is cut down and deprived of its bark; the latter is then soaked in water for a few days, after which the sticky gum or milk adhering to it is scraped off. The bark is then dried in the sun and kept in the hut until the women find time to pound it into cloth. In this state it is called *kusni* by the Miskito, Twahka, and Panamaka, and *kuska* by the Ulwa. As it becomes hard and shrinks considerably, it has to be submerged in the neighboring stream for a short time before the pounding of it begins. The latter operation is performed on a small log[33] (M.: *tun-dusa;* S.: *lañlañ*) with the aid of a wooden mallet having the shape of a short thick club, into which longitudinal ridges have been made at the head part. This mallet is known by the names *kakka* and *para*, after the two small species of palm, from the stem of which it is made.[34] The Miskito living around Brus Lagoon and on the lower Rio Patuca also make use of the stem of a small fan-leafed palm which grows in that region and is known to Indians and foreigners by the name "palmetto." The bark extends gradually upon being pounded, and it becomes soft and flexible. After being washed and dried, it is ready for use, and has a brownish color. In Oceania the same process is employed and a similarly shaped mallet is used to manufacture the bark cloth, known by the name "tapa," but the tree of those regions is a species of Morus.

WHITE BARK CLOTH.—A similar cloth, but almost white in color and of superior quality, is obtained by the same process from the inner bark of a species of Ficus (S.: *yakuta, yakanta*) and likewise from the rubber tree (*Castilla* sp.). But in both cases the manufacture of the cloth is more laborious. The cloth from these two trees is known locally as "white tunu" (M.: *tunu pihni;* S.: *yakanta, tas-banna*); it [754] is used by the sorcerer in connection with incantations. For this purpose the sukya marks it with designs in black and red obtained with the aid of clay, charcoal, or vegetable juices.

Raveneau de Lussan (439) mentions the manufacture by the Miskito of clothing and covers from the "bastard palm"; the present writer ignores what kind of tree is meant thereby, as no part of any palm is utilized nowadays for such a purpose.

CERAMICS

323 Pottery making is rapidly becoming a lost art among the Sumu, owing to the introduction of iron and cheap tinware, while it is entirely unknown to the Miskito of the present day. The Sumu from Rio Bocay have attained some skill in making earthernware of different

[33] According to Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 251) the Miskito were pounding their bark cloth upon stones around 1671.

[34] It is not uncommon that the plant, which furnishes the material, gives also the name of the tool.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

278 Camotillo is the Spanish name for a tuberous plant, said to be not unlike the sweetpotato vine. It is supposed to grow in a wild state in certain regions of the Mosquito Coast, in the neighborhood of the rivers, but it is known only to few persons. The tuber is dried in the sun and reduced to a fine powder by a very laborious process. After pulverization it is introduced into the food or drink of the intended victim. Death will set in after exactly as many days as the tuber in question had been extracted from the soil at the time of administration.

The Ladinos believe that many Miskito and Sumu are acquainted with this manner of disposing of an enemy, but I was unable to obtain from these Indians any reliable details pertaining to the plant. All my Indian informants denied knowing it. In 1919 the candidates for president and vice president of Honduras died several months previous to the election, and the ignorant people of that Republic ascribed their deaths to the administration of camotillo by adherents of the rival political party.

753 WITCH POISON.—Many Indians believe that poison can be wafted through the air to the intended victim. The fear of "buried poison" ●754 has been introduced among the Miskito by Negroes from British Honduras and Jamaica, who have settled at the coast. In fact the Miskito of Rio Coco and Honduras nowadays ascribe disease not so much to the mischief of evil spirits as to the presence of buried poison in the neighborhood of the sick person's house. This poison is supposed to have been hidden there by one of his enemies with the object of causing him to fall into some lingering disease, as dysentery, and eventually to die. Such poison, which is generally inclosed in a bottle, is said to soak through the cork, spread to the surface, and then cause disease to all the people in the neighborhood.

755 When after the administration of different remedies there is no improvement in the condition of a sick person, a "poison doctor," that is, a sukya skilled in the discovery of such witch poison, is called. The latter, upon his arrival, takes a little walk around the house, and then pretends to smell buried poison in the neighborhood. He promises to take it out if everyone in the settlement will give him a small amount of money. As the presumed bad effects of such buried poison will gradually spread to the whole village, everyone will pay his share, and the following day the sorcerer promises to do the needful. In the meantime, generally during the night, he buries a small flask of a dark liquid near the house of the sick person. In the morning the entire population of the village is present in order to witness the extraction of the source of the illness. After searching the vicinity of the house for a considerable time the sukya finally walks to the spot where he buried the small bottle during the night, and then triumphantly shouts: *Nara sa* "Here it is." He shows the

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

ordinary mortals. Thanks to these supposed powers, he is feared and respected far and wide. Such a state of affairs is occasionally very injurious to the Indian community as a whole, but in general abuses on the part of the sukya are not common.

Besides curing the sick, the advice of the sukya is sought in many instances. He is consulted in order to find out the whereabouts of a lost or stolen object, and he furnishes remedies to cure ill luck, to influence the heart of a person of the opposite sex, to increase the valor and courage of a man, and the like. He will inform the hunter how to proceed in order to secure plenty of game, for he has generally a good knowledge of the instincts and habits of animals. If he is unsuccessful, he claims that his client has transgressed some prescription.

Some of these shamans have some knowledge of astronomy; others imitate the voice of other persons or of animals and birds, and some appear to be clever ventriloquists. They foretell the death of a sick person, and help artificially by means of poison on the specified day, in order to strengthen their reputation.

The sukya will also be asked to harm an enemy by casting an evil spell over him. The usual method followed by the Miskito sukya is to fire a gun in the direction of the person upon whom he wishes to inflict injury. His Sumu confrère will send disease or death by mistreating or stabbing an object, usually a doll or puppet (M.: *yapti;* S.: *dilaina*), made of white tunu bark, and supposed to represent the intended victim. Some of these sorcerers are also said to transform themselves into a snake or jaguar and then harm their enemy.

There are good and bad sukyas, who are sometimes at feud with each other. In his own village the sukya is generally said to be good, but in the neighboring settlement there is a bad one, whom he has to fight and send away the evil spirit which the latter despatches in order to cause disease and death. The bad sukya will, for instance, send an animal or bird with poison to the neighboring village, but his confrère from the latter settlement sees it coming and sends it back. The animal goes hither and thither, until finally the "stronger" of the two opponents wins.

INITIATION OF THE SUKYA.—The choosing of his career by the sukya is supposed not to be voluntary. A person whom destiny has picked out for this high office is said to come under the influence of some spirits, from whom he is unable to deliver himself. During the night he acts like an insane person; he gets up from bed and talks with invisible beings in a mysterious "spirit" language.

In this state he makes prophecies, and if these come true his friends will urge him to become a sukya. He then prepares himself for his career through fastings, vigils, and other means of achieving exhaustion and the novice will be reduced to a skeleton. During this

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

catch. To most Indians the okuli is the greatest man on earth; they do not dare say anything against him, for he knows everything that goes on, no matter how far away he is.

THE SPIRITIST.—A new movement, not unlike the nyalism among Jamaican Negroes, has appeared among the Christianized Miskito during the last 40 years. While engaged in fervent prayers, either in church or at home, certain people suddenly begin to act like mad; they shiver over the whole body, run and dance around, give out loud screams, and by other means seek to attract attention.

They claim that at such periods they have no control over their actions, and that the latter are due to the presence of the Holy Ghost in themselves. For this reason they are known among the Miskito as *spirit-upliks* "spirit men." While in this state of ecstasy they are supposed to be able to cure the sick by laying hands upon them. They also pretend having revelations from God during their dreams.

Although excluded from church membership by the Moravians, the spirit men or spirit women, for the female sex is not excluded from this office, frequent the churches. They pretend to be good Christians, and their influence is very great among the Christianized Miskito. The movement has, however, not had many followers among the Sumu. In certain districts the spiritists cause more trouble to the work of evangelization than to their heathen confrères, the sukyas. Although attributing the results of their cures directly and solely to the will of God, some of these spiritists make use of native herbs, of which they have a crude knowledge.

OBEAH OR VOODOOISM.—The belief in obeah (obia) was brought over from Africa by the slaves, and it still exists among the ignorant Creoles and the immigrated West Indian Negroes. The Blacks from British Honduras are especially noted as great obeah or voodoo men.

Feathers, bones, colored rags, thunderbolts (stone axes), and small bottles filled with insects and powdered earth, belong to the paraphernalia of these shamans, whose mode of working their spells does not differ essentially from that of the Indian sukya. Some of the obeah men from Jamaica or British Honduras have become sukya upon settling among the Indians of the Mosquito Coast.

The obeah men are much feared by the Creoles, Negroes, and Indians, as they are supposed to inflict bad luck, disease, and death upon an enemy. When some one is suffering from a lingering malady it is said that obeah is "on" him. His only recourse is to go to an obeah man, who will remove the evil for the payment of a sum of money. This sort of sorcery is, indeed, a very profitable business. Should the sick person die, however, the obeah man will claim that his instructions have not been carried out.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

There are many ways practiced commonly by the obeah man to injure his own enemy or that of his client. He may send to the intended victim a "duppy" (evil spirit). Or he may work with buried "poison," that is to say, he buries in the vicinity of the house of his intended victim a package containing rags, feathers, bones, and the like, after which the latter will fall sick and eventually die. Again he may introduce poison in his food by means of a third person. The obeah man may attain the object in view, that is to set obeah on his enemy, by merely making a cross or some other mark on the house, canoe, or some tool of the latter, or by shaking hands with him. It is even claimed that some "strong" obeah men are able to direct poisonous snakes to the bed of the intended victim. Sometimes such a sorcerer brings about the desired effect, owing to the great credulity of the people, who are so afraid of him that they do not even dare to denounce him. 754

MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL LIFE

The Indian girl is sold by her parents for a gun or a head of cattle, but she is rarely forced to become the wife of a man whom she does not love. Before giving their daughter away in marriage the parents will satisfy themselves that the suitor is able to provide for his future wife and that he understands the manufacture of hunting and fishing implements. 583

COURTSHIP.—The efficacy of certain drugs or herbs in stimulating virility, exciting venery, and in conquering the heart of a person of the opposite sex is believed in by these Indians, and by many Ladinos and Creoles as well. By allowing a few drops of such a "love medicine" (M.: *yumni kilkaya silka;* T.: *yumni talaia panankas;* U.: *pumka talaaka dikabasta*) to fall on the clothes, handkerchief, head, or body of a person, the affection of the latter may be obtained. Other herbs used in a similar manner will produce the opposite effect; such an infusion (M.: *miskara kilkaya silka;* T.: *ba talaia panankas;* P.: *ma tsikni talaia panankas;* U.: *di dutka talaaka dikabasta*) is used to separate lovers who will thenceforth have a profound repugnance toward each other. Certain old people are supposed to be able to prepare very efficacious remedies of this kind, which they will sell for as much as $5. Should, however, the secret of the preparation be communicated, the charge will be about five times higher. A preparation of the Spanish fly or blister beetle, of which two varieties exist, a small brown one and a larger one which is black with longitudinal yellow bars, is believed also by some to act as a love potion; others again say that it will produce craziness. In reality this insect is a poison, but may be used in medicine as a diuretic and vesicatory. The Ladinos believe that practically all the Indians and Creoles of 832 [825] [278]

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

a little while, feeling himself alone, he opened his eyes, and looking around, he found himself only a few steps from his own house.

Upon getting home, his wife wanted to know where he had been so long. He refused to tell the truth for fear of the revenge of the people from the peccary country, and told her that he had been lost in the bush. But she noticed that he was hiding the truth and kept on insisting that something extraordinary must have happened for his having succeeded in killing a *sikwakaya*.

Finally he agreed to tell. He sat in his hammock, while all the neighbors surrounded him to hear the details of his strange adventure, and then he proceeded to narrate everything that had happened to him since he left home. But the moment he finished his story he died.

WITCHES.—Certain people of either sex are supposed to be greatly addicted to witchcraft, and to be able to transform themselves at will into owls or "lechuzas" (M.: *ini yula* or *kimi yula*; S.: *yula mañá*[a]).

Some bad people transform themselves into a smaller species of owl (T.: *yawak*; U.: *oñ*) and in their zoömorphic form introduce themselves during the night into the huts of their enemies, when the latter are asleep, in order to carry off the small children. The Miskito do not participate in this belief.

CYCLOPS.—In the bush lives also a curious being, shaped somewhat like a giant human being, but having a head similar to that of a dog. It has only one eye, while its large mouth is at the navel.

WATER NYMPH.—The mermaid or water nymph (M.: *liwa*; T., P.: *wan mailani*; U.: *wan sirok*) is an evil water animal, which occasionally causes snags and strong ripples where the water otherwise is very smooth. It drives the fish away so that the Indian can not catch anything, and it incites the alligator to attack the canoes and upset them. It also assumes the shape of a beautiful woman and walks on land to entice the young men down to the waterside, when suddenly it pushes its victim into the water and devours it. Its head is that of a human being, but the body resembles that of a fish. This monster is also said to inhabit the sea, where it occasions waterspouts and hurricanes; the Miskito living at the coast call it also *kabo wisaks* "sea spirit."

WAIWIN OR WAIWAN.—This name is applied by Miskito, Sumu, Rama, and Creoles to a black, doglike bush animal, with a nose shaped like that of the large anteater and with fiery eyes similar to balls of fire. It corresponds approximately to the "cadejo" of the Ladinos. Its claws rattle on the ground as it runs along with great swiftness. It spits fire and does not do any harm if left unmolested, but will throw down on the ground any one trying to stop it. There

[a] Lit., "people of the stone."

773 same way that manioc is planted. Some of the tribes recount a myth of a
774 great flood. The *Jicaque* believe in two benevolent deities and a female god of evil. No offerings are made to the "good" deities, but attempts are made to placate the "evil" one, a female who is responsible for all misfortune and who causes death.

775 The *Sumo* and *Mosquito* and possibly the *Paya* believe that after death the soul makes its way eastward over a difficult route to a nether world of plenty and happiness. The description of the route traveled and the acts performed by the survivors of the deceased to aid the progress of his soul on this road differ from tribe to tribe. Under certain conditions the soul may remain about the house of the deceased and even occupy his former belongings, including domestic animals. For this reason these things must be destroyed.

776 The *Sumo*, *Mosquito*, and *Paya* believe that the world is populated with
789 innumerable spirits. These haunt hills, caves, deep pools of water, and other places, and they are responsible for most misfortunes including sickness and death. A large part of the work of shamans is to placate these spirits, to drive them out of sick people, and otherwise to destroy them. Protection from the bad spirits is afforded by amulets and charms.

SHAMANISM

756 Most *Sumo* and *Mosquito* settlements have a shaman, who may take part in secular affairs but whose chief duty is to cure the sick. Shamans possess some spiritual power, but very little is known of the various rituals through which it is acquired. Sons and sometimes sons-in-law may
755 succeed a shaman. Curing varies in detail according to the individual shaman and the spirits addressed. A shaman goes into a trance in which he contacts the spirits and, in one way or another, drives them out of the afflicted person. Curing rituals also include songs, dances, and the use of painted sticks, carved figures, and other paraphernalia. Some diseases are cured by the imposition of diets, the prohibition of sexual intercourse, and other restrictions. Complicated diseases or village-wide epidemics are isolated and receive special medical and ceremonial treatment. Infections, snake bites, and diseases such as malaria are cured by both shamans and laymen, the latter using infusions of herbs and a large number of native medicines. Steam baths followed by a cold plunge are also employed. Baths in hot springs and partial burial in hot sand are common practices, especially among the *Sumo*. When surgery is necessary a shaman employs
[778] knives made of obsidian, flint, bone, and such. Ashes, tobacco, wax, and resin are used as antiseptics.

756 A shaman may also prophesy the future or determine the route hunters
[787] should take in order to find game. By conjuring, a shaman may cause
[754] harm to come to people. A shaman may be retained by a person to eliminate an enemy.